# The Witch That Was Hurt

## Migratory Legends of Type 3055

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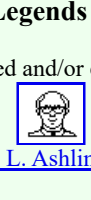

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## The Miller Boy and the Cat

### Austria

Once a mill hand came to a miller and asked him for work, saying that he had been underway a long time and wanted to earn a few kreutzers once again. The miller liked the mill hand, for he was a quick and lively fellow. He would have given him work at once if it hadn't been for an unusual concern of his.

He scratched himself behind the ears for a while and then slowly expressed his opinion: "Yes, I need a mill hand, and I'm not likely to find a better one than you, but there is another problem."

"What sort of one? asked the miller boy hurriedly.

"Now you may not believe me, but what I'm going to say is the truth. Every time I have had a mill hand sleep in the mill, the next morning he was discovered dead. I've not been able to find out what is behind this, but that's the way it is."

It has never occurred to me that I should be afraid of someone," replied the mill hand, laughing. "Let me have a go at it. I am not by nature a fraidy-cat."

"It would be a shame to lose your young life," said the miller. "No one else has escaped alive. You won't be any different."

"The long and short of it is that I am not afraid. Give me work, and I'll stay with you."

"If you are willing to gamble with your life, then stay. It will serve you right," replied the miller, half pleased and half angry.

The new mill hand went into the mill and worked in spite of it all.

When night fell he lay down a bit, but he did not let himself fall asleep, looking and looking to see what might be haunting the mill. Suddenly a large, beautiful cat crept up to him, meowed, arched its back, wagged its tail, and continued to creep around the mill hand. It was all he could do to ward off the uncanny animal. When he realized that "Get!" and "Scat!" and such sayings were to no avail, he became angry, grabbed the cat by its tail and hurled it a good distance from him. With that the cat slunk out the door.

The mill hand thought to himself, "Just dare to come back!" and lay back down and slept without further disturbance.

Early the next morning the miller came, expecting to see the mill hand's corpse. Was he surprised when the boy approached him, singing and whistling, and told him the story of the cat.

As evening was approaching the mill hand fetched a little hatchet and hid it in his bed. Night soon came. The boy lay down, and again the cat crept up to him meowing. This time the mill hand did not shoo it away, but was nice to it and attempted to lure it closer and closer to him. When it was standing right next to his bed, he quickly pulled out the hatchet and with a laugh chopped off one of its front paws. With pitiful meows the cat hobbled on three legs out the door.

Early the next morning the miller came again to see how the boy had fared. The latter had scarcely come into his master's view when he joyfully cried out, "Just see what the beast left behind! It will never come to me again!" With these words he showed the miller the paw that he had chopped off the cat.

The miller had a good laugh and could not have been more pleased with his new mill hand. After laughing his fill, he went about his business, and the morning passed like any other, although the master did wonder why his wife was nowhere to be seen.

Noontime came, and there was still no fire in the kitchen. The master finally lost his patience, and he shouted everywhere for his "old woman." But she neither came nor answered. Finally the miller went upstairs to the bedroom where he found his wife still in bed.

"What you are doing? It is noontime already, and there is not even a piece of kindling burning yet in the kitchen."

"I can't cook today. Something is wrong with me."

The miller was curious what was wrong with her, noticing that she was holding her hands in a strange manner. Then he suddenly saw that one of her hands had been cut off.

"Aha," he thought to himself, "so that is what's wrong with you!"

Angrily he ran down the stairs and told the mill hand what had happened. The mill hand also perceived immediately that the cat had been none other than the master's wife, and that she was a wicked witch.

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- Source: Ignaz and Joseph Zingerle, "Der Müllerbursch und die Katze," *Kinder- und Hausmärchen, gesammelt durch die Brüder Zingerle* (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagner'schen Buchhandlung, 1852), no. 39, pp. 251-54.
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## The Witch as Cat

### Bohemia

At the end of the sixteenth century a miller woman lived in a mill with her six children. No servant could stay in this mill because during the night a cat with six kittens would always come and bite and scratch the worker, sometimes to death. However, one day a journeyman came to the mill who knew black magic.

When he asked for a night's lodging the miller woman said that it would not go well with him, because the place was haunted.

"That doesn't matter," said the journeyman. "I'm not afraid."

That evening he lit a candle, drew a circle around himself with sanctified chalk, then sat down at the table. Near midnight a black cat with her six kittens approached the light, wanting to put it out. The journeyman grabbed a hatchet and cut off one of the cat's paws. She let out a terrible shriek, then all of them ran out the door.

The next morning the miller woman was ill, and no one knew what was wrong with her. However, the journeyman knew what it was; that morning instead of a cat's paw he had found a human hand lying on the ground. He reported the event, and the miller woman was burned to death, along with her children, for these too someday would have learned witchcraft.

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- Source: Josef Virgil Grohmann, "Die Hexe als Katze," *Sagen-Buch von Böhmen und Mähren. Erster Theil: Sagen aus Böhmen* (Prague: Verlag der J. G. Calve'schen k.k. Universitäts Buchhandlung, 1863), pp. 225-26.
- Grohmann's source: "Krolmus II, 453."
- Bohemia is a historical region, now a part of the Czech Republic.
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## The Witch

### Germany

A miller at a windmill near Wettin was for a long time unable to get a mill hand, because the mill was haunted, and four workers had already died there, one after the other. He finally hired a high-spirited boy. At midnight the boy was shaking out the grain when a small black cat crept up to him. A somewhat larger one followed, and the two of them grinned sinisterly at him.

The one said to the other, "I wish the big gray one would come."

Soon thereafter a big gray cat arrived. As soon as it saw the boy it jumped at his throat; but with an ax the boy skillfully struck off half its paw, which immediately turned into half of a woman's arm. Then the cats ran away.

The next morning the boy waited in vain for his breakfast. He went downstairs and asked the miller why there was nothing to eat. The miller apologized, saying that his wife had turned deathly ill.

"Is she perhaps missing half an arm?" asked the boy. "If so, I can lend her one."

And in truth one of the woman's arms was only half there, and the severed piece fit onto the stump.

Then it was known that she was a witch, and she was burned to death.

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- Source: J. G. Th. Grässe, "Die Hexe," *Sagenbuch des Preußischen Staats*, vol. 1 (Glogau: Verlag von Carl Flemming, 1868), no. 364, p. 325.
- Wettin is a small town in the state of Saxony-Anhalt (*Sachsen-Anhalt*), in Germany.
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## The Haunted Mill

### Germany

In a village there was a mill. The miller could no longer get anyone to work for him, because several workers had died in the mill in a mysterious manner.

One day a mill hand came to the miller and asked about work. The miller said that he desperately needed a helper, but he had to tell him that things were not exactly right in his mill. The mill hand was an outgoing fellow, and he asked the master to hire him, saying that he would deal with the spook. The master agreed to this.

That night the mill hand went into the mill, taking a sword with him. At the stroke of midnight a wet cat crept through a hole into the mill and sat down next on the stove bench. After it had sat there a while and second cat came, and then a third one, and they took places next to the first cat.

And then a miracle! The more they warmed themselves, the larger they grew.

Then the first cat said, "Shall we? Shall we?"

The next one answered, "Eeow!"

And the third one, "Get him!"

Then all three, each with a powerful leap, jumped at the mill hand, hissing and spitting, and with angry sparks spraying from their eyes.

The mill hand did not stand idly by. With his sword he cut off a leg of the first cat, and it began to cry pitifully. Then all three cats hurriedly slipped out the same hole through which they had entered.

He picked up the leg, and it was a human hand with a gold ring on one finger. He wrapped it in a cloth. The next morning he took it to the master and told him of the adventure that he had withstood. The latter was very pleased to hear this, for he hoped that the spook would no longer be interested in returning.

At breakfast the master said to his mill hand, "My wife is very ill."

The mill hand wanted to see her, claiming that in some regards he knew just as much as a doctor. The miller led him to the room where his wife was lying.

The mill worker said, "Show me your right hand!" The woman showed him her left hand.

The mill worker said again, "No, show me the right one!" but she refused.

Then the mill hand unwrapped the severed hand from the cloth and held it out. The woman began to shake like aspen leaves. Her face became distorted; and with moans and groans she confessed that she was a witch and that she had been the cat. She also named her two accomplices. And then she died a horrible death.

Since then nothing unusual has happened at the mill.

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- Source: Karl Gander, "Die unheimliche Mühle," *Niederlausitzer Volkssagen, vornehmlich aus dem Stadt- und Landkreise Guben* (Berlin: Deutsche Schriftsteller-Genossenschaft, 1894), no. 75, pp. 29-30.
- Gander's source: "Oral, from Guben."
- Guben lies on the Neisse River on the border between Germany and Poland.
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## Trudd as Cat

### Germany

For a long time a mill hand had been plagued every night by Trudd. Then one night, following the advice of an experienced man, he took a sharpened sabre to bed with him and stayed awake looking for what might come. Suddenly a cat crept up to the bed, then positioned itself to jump onto it. It scarcely had its claws on the sideboard of the bedstead when the mill hand struck with the sabre, cutting off the claws at their roots. In the same instant the cat disappeared.

The next morning it was reported that the miller's wife was still in bed. It was said that during the night she had fallen down the cellar stairs and badly hurt her hands. In reality, however, al of her fingers had been cut off.

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- Source: Karl Reiser, *Sagen, Gebräuche und Sprichwörter des Allgäus, aus dem Munde des Volkes gesammelt* (Kempten: J. Kosers Verlag, 1895), vol. 1, no. 212, p. 197.
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## The Girl Who Transformed Herself into a Hare

### Germany

In Trent there formerly lived a girl who had inherited a witch's thong from her grandmother. Whenever she tied the thong around herself she would turn into a hare. In this form she often heckled a forester who lived in the vicinity. Whenever he would shoot at her, his bullets just glanced off her pelt. When he came to realize that there was something uncanny going on here, he loaded his flintlock with a coffin nail that he had somehow acquired.

The next time he saw the hare, he shot it as it was running away. In an instant the hare disappeared, and the girl stood before him in its place. With tears she asked him for help, for she had a serious wound on her foot. In order to gain his sympathy, she confessed her evil power to the forester, promising never again to make use of it.

For a time she kept her promise, but no sooner had her foot healed than she fell back into her old vices. Now her fiancé worked as a herdsman at a nearby estate, and she frequently made use of her thong in order to visit him often and undisturbed. Her fiancé knew nothing of her powers, and one day when she appeared before him as a hare -- for she had not yet had time to assume her human form -- he struck her with a water carrier. As a result she started to bleed profusely, and with tears she confessed to her fiancé what her situation was.

He broke off his relationship with her. She remained lame for the rest of her life. It is said that the witch's thong was later buried in the grandmother's grave.

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- Source: A. Haas, "Mädchen in Hasengestalt," *Rügensche Sagen und Märchen* (Stettin, 1903), no. 105, pp. 92-93.
- Trent (Germany) is a town on the island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea.
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## Witch as Hare

### Germany

On two days a hunter from Freiburg saw a hare in Schlossberg Forest and shot at it. Both times it stood still, looked mockingly at the man, only running away when the latter hurried toward it. The hunter presumed that he was dealing with witchcraft, so he loaded his gun with consecrated powder, then used this to shoot at the hare when he saw it a third time. Instead of a hare, a female personage was there, standing on her head and bleeding from a gunshot wound in her breast. When the hunter touched her, she fell to the ground dead.

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- Source: Bernhard Baader, "Hexe als Hase," *Volkssagen aus dem Lande Baden und den angrenzenden Gegenden* (Karlsruhe: Verlag der Herder'schen Buchhandlung, 1851), no. 62, p. 50.
- Freiburg im Breisgau is a city in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.
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## Witch as Goose

### Germany

Some years ago at two o'clock in the morning the nightwatchman at Wertheim saw a goose walking next to him in the street. He caught it and took it to the guardhouse, where he locked it under a bench. The next morning, instead of the goose, a woman from Wertheim was lying there, which verified, as was already suspected, that she was a witch.

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- Source: Bernhard Baader, "Hexe als Gans," *Neugesammelte Volkssagen aus dem Lande Baden und den angrenzenden Gegenden* (Karlsruhe: A. Gessner'sche Buchhandlung, 1859), no. 150, p. 112.
- Wertheim is a town in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.
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## Witch as Fox

### Germany

A number of hunters from Reutte went on a fox hunt in the "belt" between Reutte and Heiterwang. They did not neglect to load something consecrated into their weapons.

After they had waited a long while, a fox finally came into view, and they fired a heavy volley at it. The fox tumbled down, but then it got back on its feet and fled. The hunters followed its tracks, which were clearly visible in the snow.

After they had followed the tracks for a good stretch, it suddenly occurred to them that the footprints left by the fox in the snow were getting larger and larger, finally taking the form of human footprints. They could even clearly see that the tracks could have been made only by slippers.

They could only imagine what all this had to do with the fox that they had shot at, but they continued to follow the tracks, which led them finally to a house in the upper marketplace in Reutte. An old woman lived in this house, and she was lying in bed with a bullet wound in her body.

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- Source Karl Reiser, *Sagen, Gebräuche und Sprichwörter des Allgäus, aus dem Munde des Volkes gesammelt* (Kempten: J. Kosers Verlag, 1895), vol. 1, no. 207/1, pp. 193-94.
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## A Witch Is Recognized

### Germany

A journeyman cooper found work with an old female master in Binsachsen. Once when he was going out for the evening, the woman asked him if he was not afraid to come home by himself. "No," he said. His way home led him across a meadow, where a large cat approached him and ran along beside him. He took no further notice of it.

The next evening he went out again, and his landlady once again asked him if he was not afraid. He told her about the cat, but said that he had no fear of such a dumb animal. This time when he came to the meadow the cat was there again, but now it ran toward him and was about to jump on him. He hit it with a pair of pincers, breaking its left front leg, and it fled screaming.

The next morning the master did not get out of bed. The journeyman pulled back her covers and saw that her left arm was broken. Thus it was disclosed that the woman was a witch.

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- Source: J. W. Wolf, *Hessische Sagen* (Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1853), no. 112, pp. 73-74.
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## A Witch Is Recognized

### Germany

Whenever a certain peasant brewed beer, someone drank it all up during the night. He finally decided to stay up and keep watch throughout the night.

He did this, and as he was standing by his vat, a large number of cats approached him. He called out to them:

> Here kitty,
> Here cat,
> Come and warm yourselves!

Then they all sat down in a large circle around the fire and warmed themselves.

After they had sat there for a little while, he asked them if the water was hot.

"It is almost boiling!" they answered, and as soon as they said this, he took the ladle and sprinkled the whole lot of them, whereupon they all disappeared in an instant.

The next day his wife had a badly burned face, so he knew who had been drinking up his beer.

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- Source: A. Kuhn and W. Schwartz, "Hexe erkannt," *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Meklenburg, Pommern, der Mark, Sachsen, Thüringen, Braunschweig, Hannover, Oldenburg und Westfalen, aus dem Munde des Volkes gesammelt* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1848), no. 321, pp. 287-88.
- Kuhn's and Schwartz's source: "Oral, from Scharrel."
- Scharrel is a village in Lower Saxony (*Niedersachsen*), Germany.
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## A Witch Burnt

### Netherlands

The castle of Erendegen was so awfully haunted, that it would not have been possible, with all the gold in the world, to prevail on any one of the peasants of the village to pass a single night in it. At last, however, a man came to the place who was known by the name of bold Jan, who offered to go to the castle, and stay any length of time, requiring only to be furnished with everything necessary for the frying of pancakes. This was promised, and Jan in the evening proceeded to the castle.

In one of the best rooms he made a fire and began busily to fry, when the door opened, and in walked a black cat, and sat down before the fire, as if for the purpose of warming herself. She then asked Jan what he was doing.

"I am frying pancakes, my little friend," said Jan, and the words were hardly out of his mouth, when seven cats entered at the same time, one of which appeared to be the superior. These likewise asked Jan what he was doing, and Jan again answered, "I am frying pancakes."

The cats then taking each other's paw began to dance round and round. Jan now filled the pan with butter, which when melted and scalding hot, he threw over the cats, and in one instant they all vanished.

On the following day it was said in the village, that the shoemaker's wife was burnt over her whole body, of which the soldier knew something, and assured the inhabitants that thenceforth the castle would be no more haunted. And so it proved, for the cats never ventured to return.

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- Source: Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology: Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and Superstitions of Scandinavia, North Germany, and the Netherlands*, vol. 3 (London: Edward Lumley, 1852), pp. 238-39.
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## Witches as Cats in Manternach

### Luxembourg

Some time ago a woman called Castle Lady and who was thought to be a witch lived in a small hut in Manternach. One night two cats came to the bedroom window of a man and howled pitifully. When the man got up and went outside the one cat ran away. The man grabbed the other one and beat it thoroughly, then threw it down the steps. Nevertheless it returned, and the man beat it until it stuck all four legs up; then he threw it over the wall into the garden.

The next morning Castle Lady came to him and complained of pain throughout her entire body. The man said, "So, you old rascal, you are the one who made such a spectacle last night, the one I threw down the steps?"

"Yes, I am the one," said the woman miserably.

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- Source: N. Gredt, "Hexen als Katzen zu Manternach," *Sagenschatz des Luxemburger Landes* (Luxemburg: B. Bück, 1883), no. 209, p. 119.
- Gredt's source: Teacher Oswald in Manternach.
- Manternach is a small town in eastern Luxembourg.
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## The Blacksmith's Wife of Yarrowfoot

### Scotland

Some years back, the blacksmith of Yarrowfoot had for apprentices two brothers, both steady lads, and, when bound to him, fine healthy fellows.

After a few months, however, the younger of the two began to grow pale and lean, lose his appetite, and show other marks of declining health. His brother, much concerned, often questioned him as to what ailed him, but to no purpose.

At last, however, the poor lad burst into an agony of tears, and confessed that he was quite worn out, and should soon be brought to the grave through the ill-usage of his mistress, who was in truth a witch, though none suspected it. "Every night," he sobbed out, "she comes to my bedside, puts a magic bridle on me, and changes me into a horse. Then, seated on my back, she urges me on for many a mile to the wild moors, where she and I know not what other vile creatures hold their hideous feasts. There she keeps me all night, and at early morning I carry her home. She takes off my bridle, and there I am, but so weary I can ill stand. And thus I pass my nights while you are soundly sleeping."

The elder brother at once declared he would take his chance of a night among the witches, so he put the younger one in his own place next to the wall, and lay awake himself till the usual time of the witch-woman's arrival. She came, bridle in hand, and flinging it over the elder brother's head, up sprang a fine hunting horse. The lady leaped on his back, and started for the trysting-place, which on this occasion, as it chanced, was the cellar of a neighboring laird.

While she and the rest of the vile crew were regaling themselves with claret and sack, the hunter, who was left in a spare stall of the stable, rubbed and rubbed his head against the wall till he loosened the bridle, and finally got it off, on which he recovered his human form. Holding the bridle firmly in his hand, he concealed himself at the back of the stall till his mistress came within reach, when in an instant he flung the magic bridle over her head, and, behold, a fine gray mare!

He mounted her and dashed off, riding through hedge and ditch, till, looking down, he perceived she had lost a shoe from one of her forefeet. He took her to the first smithy that was open, had the shoe replaced, and a new one put on the other forefoot, and then rode her up and down a plowed field till she was nearly worn out. At last he took her home, and pulled the bridle off just in time for her to creep into bed before her husband awoke, and got up for his day's work.

The honest blacksmith arose, little thinking what had been going on all night; but his wife complained of being very ill, almost dying, and begged him to send for a doctor. He accordingly aroused his apprentices; the elder one went out, and soon returned with one whom he had chanced to meet already abroad.

The doctor wished to feel his patient's pulse, but she resolutely hid her hands, and refused to show them. The village Esculapius was perplexed; but the husband, impatient at her obstinacy, pulled off the bedclothes, and found, to his horror, that horseshoes were tightly nailed to both hands! On further examination, her sides appeared galled with kicks, the same that the apprentice had given her during his ride up and down the plowed field.

The brothers now came forward, and related all that had passed. On the following day the witch was tried by the magistrates of Selkirk, and condemned to be burned to death on a stone at the Bullsheugh, a sentence which was promptly carried into effect. It is added that the younger apprentice was at last restored to health by eating butter made from the milk of cows fed in kirkyards, a sovereign remedy for consumption brought on through being witch-ridden.

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- Source: William Henderson, *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders* (London: Published for the Folk-Lore Society by W. Satchell, Peyton, and Company, 1879), pp. 190-92.
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## Ridden by a Witch

### Scotland

The Macgowans of Grayscroft inTongland,and latterly of Bogra, had the power of witchcraft to a considerable extent, and it descended from one generation to another. At the time we refer to, Abraham Macgowan and his daughter Jenny resided at Grayscroft Jenny had an unlimited power from Old Nick to act as she pleased. The ploughmen at that time in their employ were Harry Dew and Davie Gordon, young men about twenty-two years of age; they had been there for the last twelve months; and conversing one day together, the following took place:

Harry: " Losh man, Davie, what makes ye sae drowsy, lazy, and sleepy-like the day, for I am verra sure ye work nae mair than I do; ye eat the same and sleep the same as I do, and yet ye are so thin and wearied and hungry-like, I dinna ken ava what ails ye; are ye weel eneugh, Davie?"

"I'm weel eneugh, Harry, but it's a' ye ken about it; sleep a night or twa at the bedside, and maybe you'll no be sae apt to ask me sic questions again."

Harry: "The bedside, Davie! What differ will that make? I hae nae mair objections to sleep there than at the wa'."

This being agreed to, they exchanged places. Nothing occurred to disturb either of them till the third night, although Harry kept watch; their bed was on the stable loft, when, about midnight, the stable door was opened cautiously, and someone was heard (by Harry only) coming up the ladder and to the bedside, with a quiet step.

A bridle was held above the one next the bedside, and the words, "Up horsey," whispered in his ear; in one moment Harry was transformed into a horse at the stable door. The saddle was got on with some kicking and plunging, but Jenny gets mounted, and off they set by the Elfcraigs, Auld Brig o' Tongland, the March Cleughs, and on till they reach the Auld Kirk of Buittle.

Harry was tied to the gate along with others. Meg o' Glengap was there on her dairymaid, now a bonny mare, neat in all her proportions. "Tib" o' Criille came on her auld ploughman, rather wind-broken. "Lizzy," frae the Bennan, came on her cot wife, limping with a swelled knee. "Moll o' the Wood" came on a herd callant frae the "How o' Siddick."

When all the horses were mustered, there was some snorting and kicking and neighing amongst them. Fairies, witches, brownies, and all met in the kirk and had a blithe holiday, under the patronage of his Satanic majesty, which continued till the crowing of the cock.

Wearied with his gallop, Harry, when the charmed bridle was taken off, found himself in his own bed and in his own shape. Harry is determined to be revenged; he finds the charmed bridle in a hole in the kitchen in a week after; he tries it on Jenny, using the same words, when Jenny is transformed into the auld brown mare of the farm; he takes her to the neighbouring smithy, and gets her, after much ado, shod all round, when he returns and leaves her, after securing the wonderful bridle.

Next morning Harry is ordered to go for a doctor, as his mistress has taken ill. He goes into the house to ask for her; pulls the bed clothes off her, and discovers there was a horseshoe on each hand and foot, when Harry says, "Jenny, my lass, that did ye."

Jenny played many more similar tricks on her neighbour lads and lasses.

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- Source (books.google.com): Campbell, John Francis, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands: Orally Collected*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1860), pp. 59-60.
- Source (Internet Archive): Campbell, John Francis, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands: Orally Collected*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1860), pp. 59-60.
- Campbell does not give this story a title.
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## The Witch of Lorn

### Scotland

In Lorn, a woman came night after night and shook a bridle at the son of a neighbouring farmer. He immediately became a horse, on which she rode to London, etc. A younger brother exchanged beds with him, and when the witches were carousing, secured the magic bridle, converted the witch herself into a horse, rode home, and before taking off the bridle took his horse to a smithy, and put on four shoes. Next day an old woman of the neighbourhood was found with her feet and hands horribly mangled.

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- Source (books.google.com): John Gregorson Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: Tales and Traditions Collected Entirely from Oral Sources* (Glasgow: Mames MacLehose and Sons, 1902), p. 49.
- Source (Internet Archive): John Gregorson Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: Tales and Traditions Collected Entirely from Oral Sources* (Glasgow: Mames MacLehose and Sons, 1902), p. 49.
- John Gregorson Campbell does not give this story a title.
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## The Silver Button

### Scotland

Silver fired from a gun will wound a witch, and force her to assume her proper shape. An English sportsman, according to a Perthshire version of an old story, was sitting surrounded by his dogs, in a mountain bothy at the dead hour of night. A cat came in, but the dogs did not move. It sat with its back to the fire, and swelled till it was as large as a yearling calf.

The Englishman took a silver button off his clothes, and putting it in the gun, fired at the cat. The brute scampered out at the door.

On going to the strath next day, the sportsman being a doctor, was sent for to see a farmer's wife, who had got suddenly ill. He went, and extracted his own silver button from her right breast.

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- John Gregorson Campbell titles this story "Silver Sixpence," although the context suggests that "The Silver Button" would be more fitting.
- Source (books.google.com): John Gregorson Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: Tales and Traditions Collected Entirely from Oral Sources* (Glasgow: Mames MacLehose and Sons, 1902), pp. 49-50.
- Source (Internet Archive): John Gregorson Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: Tales and Traditions Collected Entirely from Oral Sources* (Glasgow: Mames MacLehose and Sons, 1902), pp. 49-50.
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## The Farmer and the Witch

### Scotland

In Victoria's reign, to show how belief in witches still dwelt in Scotland (and this is but one authentic illustration among many), a woman was out early one morning. So was a farmer. He fired at what he thought was a hare which was making its way over a field and lamed it. Pursuing it, it disappeared, and he found the woman busy on the other side of the hedge bandaging her leg. Being entreated he promised not to tell, and she went ever after on a crutch, and he firmly believed he had shot her.

This same woman cursed a boy who called her names. He died within the year, and she should have rejoiced she did not live in a century earlier, for her sentence would have assuredly been *convicta et combusta*.

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- Source: Eve Blantyre Simpson, *Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales* (London: J. M. Dent and Company, 1908), p. 189.
- Simpson does not give this account a title.
- Return to the table of contents.

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## The Black Dog

### Shetland Islands

A witch, desirous of injuring a neighbor, changed herself into a black dog and made her way into the neighbor's ben-end-o'-the-hoose, where she would certainly have created serious disturbance if an old man in the family had not recognized her by a peculiar formation of the eyelids, which, it seems, she could not discard from her canine appearance.

Seizing the tongs, the worthy patriarch brought them down upon the black dog's back with might and main. "Tak' doo yon, Minnie Merran (the witch's name), he cried, "an bear doo da weight o' dis auld airm as lang as doo leeves."

The dog ran howling and limping out of the house, and when next the witch was seen, she who hitherto had walked upright and with the dignity of a Norna, leant upon a stick, and had a hump upon her back. She said she had fallen from a height, and was afraid her spine was broken. But folk called it "the mark o' auld Jockie's taings."

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- Source: *Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the Orkney and Shetland Islands*, collected by G. F. Black and edited by Northcote W. Thomas: *County Folk-Lore*, vol. 3, printed extracts, no. 5 (London: Published for the Folk-Lore Society by David Nutt, 1903), p. 53.
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## The Severed Hand

### Norway

There was a farmer whose mill was burnt down on two successive Whitsun-eves. In the third year, just before Whitsuntide, he had a tailor in his house to make holyday clothes.

"I wonder how it will go with the mill this time; whether it will be burnt again tonight," said the farmer.

"You need not fear that," said the tailor, "give me the key, and I will keep watch in it."

This seemed to the farmer both good and highly acceptable; and when it drew towards evening the tailor got the key and went to the mill, which was still empty, having but just been rebuilt. So placing himself in the middle of the floor, he chalked round him a large circle, on the outside of which he wrote the Paternoster; and thus fortified, would not have feared if the arch-enemy himself had made his appearance.

In the dead of the night the door suddenly flew open, and there came in such a multitude of black cats, that the place literally swarmed. But a short time had elapsed when they set a large earthen pot in the chimney, and lighted a fire under it, so that it began frying and hissing in the pot as if it were full of boiling pitch and tar.

"Oho," thought the tailor, "is that what you are after?" And scarcely had he given utterance to the thought when one of the cats put its paw behind the pot and tried to upset it.

"Whisht cat, you'll burn yourself!" cried the tailor.

"Whisht cat, you'll burn yourself! the tailor says," said the cat to the other cats, and all ran from the chimney, and began hopping and dancing round the circle; but in the meanwhile the cat again sneaked to the chimney and endeavoured to upset the pot.

"Whisht cat, you'll burn yourself!" cried the tailor, and drove it from the chimney.

"Whisht cat, you'll burn yourself, the tailor says," said the cat to the other cats, and all began dancing and hopping again, but in a moment the same cat was away trying a third time to overturn the pot.

"Whisht cat, you'll burn yourself!" cried the tailor in a rage, and so terrified them that they tumbled one over another, and then began to jump and dance as before.

They then formed a circle without the tailor's circle, and began dancing round it with an ever-increasing velocity, till at length it seemed to the tailor that everything was whirling round before him. All this while the cats were staring at him with their large, fierce eyes, as if they would swallow him.

While they were in the thick of it, the cat that had tried to upset the pot, put her paw within the circle, as if she felt inclined to seize hold of the tailor, but who seeing her design, drew out his knife and stood on his guard. After a few moments the cat again put her paw within the ring, when the tailor in one instant chopped it off; and all the cats took to their heels, screaming and howling, as speedily they could, and left the tailor in quiet possession of the field.

The tailor then lay down in the circle till long after the sun had been shining in upon him. He then rose, locked the mill-door and proceeded to the farmer's house.

When he entered the room the farmer and his wife were still in bed, it being Whit-Sunday.

"Good morning," said the tailor, giving the farmer his hand.

"Good morning," said the farmer in return, and was both glad and surprised to see the tailor again.

"Good morning, mother," said he, holding out his hand to the farmer's wife.

"Good morning," said she, but appeared pale and sorrowful, and kept her hand under the bed-clothes, but at last offered him her left hand. The tailor now saw how matters stood; but what afterwards took place is not said.

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- Source: Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology: Comprising the Principal Popular Traditions and Superstitions of Scandinavia, North Germany, and the Netherlands*, vol. 2 (London: Edward Lumley, 1851), pp. 32-34.
- Thorpe's source: Peter Christian Asbjørnsen, *Norske Huldreeventyr*, vol. 1 (Christiania [Oslo]: W. C. Fabritius, 1845), pp. 11-14.
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## The Witch and the Hunter

### Denmark

In Østrel, on the road between Aalborg and Thisted, there were once many witches. A hunter who often passed by the Baller farm regularly saw in the vicinity either a hare or a wild duck. Although he was an excellent marksman, he never hit either one of them.

Once he saw a duck sitting in the water near the farm and shot at it at several times, but it did not get up, as if it had noticed nothing. Neither scatter shot nor a solid ball did anything, so he cut a silver button from his jacket, blessed it three times, and loaded it into his gun. This time he hit the duck, but it flew up out of the water, into the farmyard, and roosted in the hen house.

He then ran after it and told the farm people who were seated down to supper what had happened. He asked for the duck that he had shot. The man said that he should go into the kitchen and tell the servant girl to help him get his duck. But when he went into the kitchen there was a disgusting old witch sitting in the fireplace. She had only one shoe on, and blood was running freely down her leg. She said that she had injured herself by falling down. But the hunter immediately knew that this was the witch he had shot at, and he hurried away as fast as he could.

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- Source (books.google.com): J. M. Thiele, "Hexen og Jægeren," *Danmarks Folkesagn*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1843), pp. 103-104.
- Source (Internet Archive): J. M. Thiele, "Hexen og Jægeren," *Danmarks Folkesagn*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1843), pp. 103-104.
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## A Witch in Hare-Skin

### Denmark

One winter a bad hare was was eating the poor people's cabbage from their garden next to the almshouse. A skilled marksman was summoned. He came and sat in a window in the evening to look for the hare. Towards midnight the hare hopped over the fence into the cabbage patch. The hunter sent hail of shot at it, but the hare did not seem to mind. It just stood there calmly eating the cabbage. The marksman loaded his gun again and sent another charge, but to no avail.

The hunter then asked his father, who also was a skilled marksman, what he should do. The old man had a silver shilling with a cross on it. He bent it and loaded it into his gun. The next night he went to the almshouse.

The hare came as usual, and the old marksman fired at it. The hare immediately jumped up, and in its place there stood an old woman from the town. The silver shilling was lodged in her forehead, and therefore she could no longer bewitch herself.

She had to carry this mark with her in her forehead all her days, because she had wanted to eat the poor people's cabbage.

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- Source (books.google.com): Jens Kamp, "En Heks i Hareham," *Danske Folkeminder, Æventyr, Folkesagn, Gaader, Rim og Folketro* (Odense: R. Nielsens Forlag, 1877), no. 860, p. 262.
- Source (Internet Archive): Jens Kamp, "En Heks i Hareham," *Danske Folkeminder, Æventyr, Folkesagn, Gaader, Rim og Folketro* (Odense: R. Nielsens Forlag, 1877), no. 860, p. 262.
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## An Old Witch

### England

An old witch, in days of yore, lived in this neighborhood; and whenever she wanted money she would assume the shape of a hare, and would send out her grandson to tell a certain huntsman who lived hard by that he had seen a hare sitting at such a particular spot, for which he always received the reward of sixpence.

After this deception had many times been practiced, the dogs turned out, the hare pursued, and often seen but never caught, a sportsman of the party began to suspect, in the language of the tradition, "that the devil was in the dance," and there would be no end to it.

The matter was discussed, a justice consulted, and a clergyman to boot; and it was thought that, however clever the devil might be, law and church combined would be more than a match for him. It was therefore agreed that, as the boy was singularly regular in the hour at which he came to announce the sight of the hare, all should be in readiness for a start the instant such information was given; and a neighbor of the witch, nothing friendly to her, promised to let the parties know directly the old woman and her grandson left the cottage and went off together, the one to be hunted, and the other to set on the hunt.

The news came, the hounds were unkenneled, and huntsmen and sportsmen set off with surprising speed. The witch, now a hare, and her little colleague in iniquity, did not expect so very speedy a turnout; so that the game was pursued at a desperate rate, and the boy, forgetting himself in a moment of alarm, was heard to exclaim, "Run, Granny, run! Run for your life!"

At last the pursuers lost the hare, and she once more got safe into the cottage by a little hole in the door, not large enough to admit a hound in chase. The huntsman and all the squires with their train lent a hand to break open the door, yet could not do it till the parson and the justice came up; but as law and church were certainly designed to break through iniquity, even so did they now succeed in bursting the magic bonds that opposed them.

Upstairs they all went. There they found the old hag bleeding, and covered with wounds, and still out of breath. She denied she was a hare, and railed at the whole party.

"Call up the hounds," said the huntsman, "and let us see what they take her to be. Maybe we may yet have another hunt."

On hearing this the old woman cried quarter. The boy dropped on his knees, and begged hard for mercy -- mercy was granted on condition of its being received together with a good whipping; and the huntsman, having long practiced amongst the hounds, now tried his hand on their game.

Thus the old woman escaped a worse fate for the time present; but on being afterwards put on her trial for bewitching a young woman and making her spit pins, the tale just told was given as evidence against her, before a particularly learned judge, and a remarkably sagacious jury, and the old woman finished her days, like a martyr, at the stake.

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- Anna Eliza Bray, "An Old Witch," *Traditions, Legends, Superstitions, and Sketches of Devonshire on the Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1838), pp. 277-78.
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## The Weaver's Wife and the Witch

### England

Once upon a time a weaver and his wife lived at lived at Sutton-on-Trent in Nottinghamshire. One day the weaver went to Neward to sell his linen, leaving his children in the house, and his wife, who lay ill in bed. Now at that time there lived at Sutton a witch who had some spite against the weaver's wife. A short time after the weaver had gone one of the children heard a noise as of something pattering up and down stairs. The child opened the door of the bottom stairs, and there she saw a great ugly cat, which she could not catch, try as she would. As she was trying to catch it the cat ran upstairs, sprang upon the bed where the poor woman lay, and clawed her. But the woman roused herself and knocked the cat down.

Now when the weaver came back from Newark the children told him about the cat. So he watched all night in an old lumber-room, for the cat came in and went out through a broken pane in the window.

One night the cat came in as the weaver was sitting by the fire, so he picked up a fork and struck her on the cheek. He then threw her out of doors, believing that she was dead. But in the morning, when he went to look for the cat's body, he could not find it. But ever after that the witch had her face tied up, and she had no more power to do harm to the weaver or to his family.

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- Source: Sidney Oldall Addy *Household Tales with other Traditional Remains: Collected in the Counties of York, Lincoln, Derby, and Nottingham* (London: David Nutt, 1895), no. 44, pp. 43-44.
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## The Shot Hare

### Wales

Beti Ifan was one of the witches of Bedd Gelert. Her fear had fallen upon nearly all the inhabitants, so that she was refused nothing by any one, for she had the reputation of being able to handle ghosts, and to curse people and their possessions. She therefore lived in comfort and ease, doing nothing except keeping her house moderately clean, and leaning on the lower half of her front door knitting and watching passers-by.

But there was one man in the village, a cobbler and a skilled poacher, who feared neither Beti Ifan nor any other old hag of the kind. His great hobby was to tease and annoy the old woman by showing her a hare or a wild duck, and asking her if she would like to get it. When she replied she would, he used to hand it almost within her reach and then pull it back, and walk away.

She could not do him much harm, as he had a birthmark above his breast; but she contrived a way by which she could have her revenge on him. She used to transform herself into a wild duck or hare, and continually appear before him on the meadows and among the trees whenever he went out poaching, but took good care to keep outside the reach of the gun. He, being a good shot, and finding himself missing so frequently, began to suspect something to be amiss.

He knew of a doctor who was a "skilled man" living not far away, so he went to consult him.

The doctor told him, "Next time you go out take with you a small branch of mountain ash, and a bit of vervain and place it under the stock of the gun." Then giving him a piece of paper with some writing on, he said, "When you see the hare, or any other creature of which you have some doubt, read this backward, and if it is old Beti you will see her in her own form, though she retain her assumed form; shoot at her legs, but mind you do not shoot her anywhere else."

The next day, as he was working his way through a grove near Beti's house, he could see a large hare hopping in front of him. He drew out his paper and read as he was instructed; he then fired at her legs, and the hare ran towards Beti's cottage.

He ran after it, and was just in time to see the hare jumping over the lower half of the house door. Going up to the cottage he could hear the old woman groaning; when he went in she was sitting by the fire with blood streaming from her legs. He was never again troubled with the hare-like appearances of old Beti'r Fedw.

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- Source: D. E. Jenkins, *Bedd Gellert: Its Facts, Fairies, and Folk-Lore* (Portmadox: Llewelyn Jenkins, 1899), pp. 79-80.
- Mountain ash (rowan) was known throughout Europe for its protective qualities against witches, fairies, etc.
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## The Two Cat Witches

### Wales

In old days, it was believed that the seventh son, in a family of sons, was a conjurer by nature. That is, he could work wonders like the fairies and excel the doctors in curing diseases.

If he were the seventh son of a seventh son, he was himself a wonder of wonders. The story ran that he could even cure the "shingles," which is a very troublesome disease. It is called also by a Latin name, which means a snake, because, as it gets worse, it coils itself around the body.

Now the eagle can attack the serpent and conquer and kill this poisonous creature. To secure such power, Hugh, the conjurer, ate the flesh of eagles. When he wished to cure the serpent disease, he uttered words in the form of a charm which acted as a talisman and cure.

After wetting the red rash, which had broken out over the sick person's body, he muttered, "He-eagle, she-eagle, I send you over nine seas, and over nine mountains, and over nine acres of moor and fen, where no dog shall bark, no cow low, and no eagle shall higher rise."

After that, the patient was sure that he felt better.

There was always great rivalry between these conjurers and those who made money from the pilgrims at holy wells and visitors to the relic shrines, but this fellow, named Hugh, and the monks, kept on mutually good terms. They often ate dinner together, for Hugh was a great traveler over the whole country and always had news to tell to the holy brothers who lived in cells.

One night, as he was eating supper at an inn, four men came in and sat down at the table with him. By his magical power, Hugh knew that they were robbers and meant to kill him that night, in order to get his money.

So, to divert their attention, Hugh made something like a horn to grow up out of the table, and then laid a spell on the robbers, so that they were kept gazing at the curious thing all night long, while he went to bed and slept soundly.

When he rose in the morning, he paid his bill and went away, while the robbers were still gazing at the horn. Only when the officers arrived to take them to prison did they come to themselves.

Now at Bettws-y-Coed -- that pretty place which has a name that sounds so funny to us Americans and suggests a girl named Betty the Co-ed at college -- there was a hotel, named the "Inn of Three Kegs." The shop sign hung out in front. It was a bunch of grapes gilded and set below three small barrels.

This inn was kept by two respectable ladies, who were sisters.

Yet in that very hotel, several travelers, while they were asleep, had been robbed of their money. They could not blame anyone nor tell how the mischief was done. With the key in the keyhole, they had kept their doors locked during the night. They were sure that no one had entered the room. There were no signs of men's boots, or of anyone's footsteps in the garden, while nothing was visible on the lock or door, to show that either had been tampered with. Everything was in order as when they went to bed.

Some people doubted their stories, but when they applied to Hugh the conjurer, he believed them and volunteered to solve the mystery. His motto was "Go anywhere and everywhere, but catch the thief."

When Hugh applied one night for lodging at the inn, nothing could be more agreeable than the welcome, and fine manners of his two hostesses.

At supper time, and during the evening, they all chatted together merrily. Hugh, who was never at a loss for news or stories, told about the various kinds of people and the many countries he had visited, in imagination, just as if he had seen them all, though he had never set foot outside of Wales.

When he was ready to go to bed, he said to the ladies, "It is my custom to keep a light burning in my room, all night, but I will not ask for candles, for I have enough to last me until sunrise." So saying, he bade them good night.

Entering his room and locking the door, he undressed, but laid his clothes near at hand. He drew his trusty sword out of its sheath and laid it upon the bed beside him, where he could quickly grasp it. Then he pretended to be asleep and even snored.

It was not long before, peeping between his eyelids, only half closed, he saw two cats come stealthily down the chimney.

When in the room, the animals frisked about, and then gamboled and romped in the most lively way. Then they chased each other around the bed, as if they were trying to find out whether Hugh was asleep.

Meanwhile, the supposed sleeper kept perfectly motionless. Soon the two cats came over to his clothes and one of them put her paw into the pocket that contained his purse.

At this, with one sweep of his sword, Hugh struck at the cat's paw. The beast howled frightfully, and both animals ran for the chimney and disappeared. After that, everything was quiet until breakfast time.

At the table, only one of the sisters was present. Hugh politely inquired after the other one. He was told that she was not well, for which Hugh said he was very sorry.

After the meal, Hugh declared he must say good-bye to both the sisters, whose company he had so enjoyed the night before. In spite of the other lady's many excuses, he was admitted to the sick lady's room.

After polite greetings and mutual compliments, Hugh offered his hand to say "good-by." The sick lady smiled at once and put out her hand, but it was her left one.

"Oh, no," said Hugh, with a laugh. "I never in all my life have taken any one's left hand, and, beautiful as yours is, I won't break my habit by beginning now and here."

Reluctantly, and as if in pain, the sick lady put out her hand. It was bandaged.

The mystery was now cleared up. The two sisters were cats. By the help of bad fairies they had changed their forms and were the real robbers.

Hugh seized the hand of the other sister and made a little cut in it, from which a few drops of blood flowed, but the spell was over.

"Henceforth," said Hugh, "you are both harmless, and I trust you will both be honest women."

And they were. From that day they were like other women, and kept one of the best of those inns -- clean, tidy, comfortable and at modest prices -- for which Wales is, or was, noted.

Neither as cats with paws, nor landladies, with soaring bills, did they ever rob travelers again.

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- Source: William Elliot Griffis, *Welsh Fairy Tales* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1921), no. 3, pp. 15-20.
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## The Witch Hare

### Ireland

I was out thracking hares meeself, and I seen a fine puss of a thing hopping, hopping in the moonlight, and whacking her ears about, now up, now down, and winking her great eyes, and -- "Here goes," says I, and the thing was so close to me that she turned round and looked at me, and then bounced back, as well as to say, do your worst! So I had the least grain in life of *blessed powder* left, and I put it in the gun -- and bang at her!

My jewel, the scritch she gave would frighten a rigment, and a mist, like, came betwixt me and her, and I seen her no more; but when the mist wint off I saw blood on the spot where she had been, and I followed its track, and at last it led me -- whist, whisper -- right up to Katey MacShane's door; and when I was at the thrashold, I heerd a murnin' within, a great murnin', and a groanin', and I opened the door, and there she was herself, sittin' quite content in the shape of a woman, and the black cat that was sittin' by her rose up its back and spit at me; but I went on never heedin', and asked the ould ____ how she was and what ailed her.

"Nothing," sis she.

"What's that on the floor?" sis I.

"Oh," she says, "I was cuttin' a billet of wood," she says, "wid the reaping hook," she says, "an' I've wounded meself in the leg," she says, "and that's drops of my precious blood," she says.

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- Source: William Butler Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (London: Walter Scott, 1888), pp. 154-55.
- Yeats's source: Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall.
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## Witches

### Ireland

Witches are not popular in Ireland nowadays. They were generally old hags who by the evil power they possessed could charm away butter, or compound love-potions, or at most assume the form of a hare and suck the milk from their neighbor's cows before the sunlight touched the dew.

There is a story common to every rural district in Ireland of a witch who was surprised in the act by a huntsman, and on being pursued by the dogs fled to a cabin where, having assumed her natural shape, she was discovered spinning, with the blood streaming from a wound in her side.

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- Source: Patrick Bardan, *The Dead-Watchers, and Other Folk-Lore Tales of Westmeath* (Mullingar: Printed at the "Westmeath Guardian" office, and published for the author, 1891), p. 83.
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## The Old Hare

### Ireland

When I was a little girl, 'twas out near Loop Head I live. Well, there was an old woman lived in a small little cabin by herself, and all the neighbors around used to be in dread of her. They said she was chanted [haunted]. No one knew how she lived, for she never left the cabin in the day, but they said she used to go out through the fields at night. Nearly every week some of the neigbors' milk would be gone, and if it wasn't, if they were churning for a month, 'twouldn't make butter.

One, a man name of Shawn Teigue Mack, said he would know if 'twas she that was taking the butter. So he watched all night at the cabin, and about twelve o'clock he saw a hare come out of the house. The very minute it saw Shawn, away would it across the field, but Shawn fired, and struck it in the shoulder.

Begor, the next morning tracks of blood was seen along the road to the cabin. What did Shawn do, but call to the cabin, and the door was barred from inside. But he shoved in the window, and sure enough, there was the old dame, and all her shoulder wrapped up in calico. She left the place shortly after, for she knew she was found out, and no one ever missed butter or milk after.

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- Source: "Folk-Tales from County Limerick collected by Miss D. Knox," *Folk-Lore: A Quarterly Review of Myth, Tradition, Institution, & Custom* (London: Folk-Lore Society, 1917) v. 28, p. 214.
- Knox's source: Told by Kate Vasey, Moveen, County Clare.
- I have revised Knox's spelling, changing "nabors" to "neighbors," "cum," to "come," "minit" to "minute," etc.
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## The Woman-Cat

## USA (North Carolina)

Der was a man owned a mill, an' he couldn't stay at it late. Something would run him away. One day an ol' traveller come along, an' asked him what would he give him to stay dere dat night. He said he would give him mos' anything if he would stay. So he went in, an' takin' his book, his Bible, an' surd [sword], an' sat down an' kimminced a-readin'.

It was eight or nine cats came in 'rectly after dark, an' staid there until gettin' late. An' one of them made a drive at de man, an' he up with his surd an' cut his right front foot off. An' dey all left then.

Nex' mornin' he went up to de house fur breakfast. An' de miller he was gettin' breakfas'. His wife was not able.

He wanted to know what was de trouble.

He said she was cuttin' a ham-bone in two an' hurt her han'.

He showed the man a ring, an' asked him would he own it. He said he would. He said that was his wife ring he bought him [her] befo' dey was married.

So they went in de room an' asked her was dat her ring.

She said it was not.

Then they looked, an' her right han' was cut off at de wrist.

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- Source: Elsie Clews Parsons, "Tales from Guilford County, North Carolina," *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 30, no. 116, (Apr. - Jun., 1917), pp. 168-200. This account (no. 54) is found on p. 196.
- Parson's informant: Lulu Young, about 25.
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## The Severed Hand

### USA

Mr. H___ owned a mill among the Smoky Mountains in Georgia. Three of his millers died successively of some obscure disease that the doctors could not diagnose. All these men were unmarried, and lived in the mill itself. Their illnesses were brief, and it was observed that when attacked they all vainly attempted to make some communication to their friends. This it was supposed had reference to the mysterious cause that hurried them to the grave. People began at once to feel a dread of these premises, and particularly of a long, low room off the entrance, in which these unfortunate men sat of an evening and slept.

Nobody could be induced to take the place made vacant, and it seemed as if the establishment was to be abandoned, when one of the neighbors who lived a short distance down the stream volunteered to run the mill. He ground his axe, and came the same evening. While kindling a fire on the hearth a brindled cat glided out of the chimney, and without exciting any special attention on his part at this time, ensconced herself in a dark corner near the door. He soon had a cheerful blaze, and sat down by a table in front of it to read his Bible.

But as time passed a feeling of uneasiness, of which he was conscious from the first, grew upon him, and gradually deepened into a kind of horror. It was utterly unconnected with any definite apprehension, or sense of real danger. Then the cat got up and wailed at the door, clawing to be let out. She rubbed against his legs, and looked up at him. Instantly an awful half-recognition of those eyes shot through his brain, and leaping up he seized the axe and struck at her, cutting off one foot.

With a wild woman's scream the creature darted up the chimney and disappeared, while he, thoroughly unnerved, hastened home, and found his wife bleeding to death from a severed hand.

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- Source (JSTOR): J. Hampden Porter, "Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Mountain Whites of the Alleghanies," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. 7 (1894), p. 115.
- Source (Internet Archive): J. Hampden Porter, "Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Mountain Whites of the Alleghanies," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. 7 (1894), p. 115.
- Porter does not give this account a title.
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## Related Links

Like the above stories, legends about werewolves also frequently describe how demonic shape-shifters suffer injuries which lead to their discovery. For example:

- Karl Bartsch, Werewolves (stories 1 and 3).
- Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Werewolves (story 2).

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Return to:

- Witchcraft Legends.
- D. L. Ashliman's **folktexts**, a library of folktales, folklore, fairy tales, and mythology.
- The table of contents.

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